(b) the project-wise details of those incomplete projects including the Ninth Plan allocation and the progress made; and

(c) the effective steps taken by Government to complete the said projects during the Tenth Five Year Plan period showing the outlays earmarked and the target fixed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) to (c) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Disinvestment of hospitals

†5018. PROF. R.B.S. VARMA: Will the Minister of DISINVESTMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to hand over Government hospitals to the private parties in the coming time;

(b) If so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DISINVESTMENT (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE) : (a) The mandate of the Ministry of Disinvestment is for disinvestment in Public Sector Undertakings only. No proposal for privatisation of Government hospitals is under consideration of the Government.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Privatisation of BALCO

5019. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:
SHRI GAYA SINGH:
SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:

Will the Minister of DISINVESTMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the BALCO was privatised and sold to the Sterlite Industries some time back;

(b) whether a number of BALCO Employees had already opted for the VRS package of the company before privatisation and if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether these employees have not yet been paid their full dues of VRS package and are being charged penal rent and income tax is being deducted from the full amount of VRS;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(e) by when the shares of the employees are likely to be settled and paid in full?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF DISINVESTMENT (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) The Government has disinvested 51% of its holding in BALCO to Sterlite Industries (India) Ltd. on 2nd March, 2001.

(b) to (e) As informed by the company, applications under VRS of 706 employees of BALCO were pending at the time of disinvestment. VRS has been given in five half-yearly instalments along with the interest at the rate of 7% per annum, on the future four instalments, after deducting applicable tax at source. Under the instalment scheme gratuity amount is paid in full along with the first instalment. *Ex-gratia* amount due together with notice pay, leave salary etc. less all outstanding loans and accrued interest etc. is divided in five instalments. Loan is also deducted in five instalments and not in the first instalment.

Pakistan's irk over Indian help to Afghanistan

5020. MISS MABEL REBELLO:

SHRI B. J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether US has warned India to go slow on re-construction and development plans in Afghanistan as it irks Pakistan; and

(b) the details of the healing touch re-construction or development works carried out or in the offing of the country, in Afghanistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH) : (a) India is in touch with several countries, including the US, with regard to international efforts aimed at Afghan reconstruction in the political, economic and security sectors. India's contribution has been appreciated by the government and the people of Afghanistan, and other international donors. US had, at one stage, conveyed concern of Pakistan at the reopening of our Consulates General at Kandahar and Jalalabad. It is generally recognized that such concerns have no legitimacy.

(b) India has provided extensive humanitarian, project and financial assistance to Afghanistan. Government had announced a financial commitment of US$ 100 million for reconstruction of Afghanistan. Out of this grant, a sum of US$ 10 million was transferred into the account of the Afghan government as budget subsidy in July 2002. Some of the major areas of our project assistance include the fields of Education, Health, Civil Aviation (3 aircrafts have been gifted), Public Transport (274 buses have been provided), culture & media, institution building (through training in various fields, so far nearly 500 Afghan officials have been trained at Indian institutions), information technology, security & rule of law, judiciary, banking, urban development and agriculture.